

St Austell Town Council celebrates taking over the ownership of a number of local community sites from Cornwall Council

19 December 2016

St Austell Town Council is now responsible for a number of important local community sites, securing their future for St Austell's residents and visitors. A large number of sites, including open spaces, have been transferred from Cornwall Council as part of its devolution programme. As part of this Cornwall Council and St Austell Town Council have put in place an Agency Agreement giving the Town Council the necessary permission to undertake services such as grounds maintenance and other works to public sites.

Together with the Agency Agreement this makes it one of the biggest devolution packages in the country. The "total place" devolution package includes 39 different areas of public open space, as well as responsibility for grass cutting and planting on highway verges, roundabouts and closed churchyards. The package has been agreed following 18 months of discussions between the Town Council and Cornwall Council.

This means that virtually all of the grass cutting in public areas in the town will now be done by St Austell Town Council.

The Town Council has been keen to progress the package as part of its aspirations for the community facilities in St Austell to be managed and serviced locally. This gives more local control and direction and a much greater opportunity to enhance assets and services. The main public open space sites that St Austell Town Council now own include Poltair Park, Truro Road Park, The Meadows, Linear Park, and Woodland Road Park. These transfers follow the devolution of allotments and public conveniences. They represent a big step forward in a phased package which will include a number of other services and assets being transferred to the Town Council over an agreed timescale. The next phase will include the library, priory car park and other buildings.

Mayor of St Austell and Town Councillor Jackie Bull said, **"This is great news for everyone in St Austell. The Town Council now owns a number of the open spaces and will be able to care for them locally. I thank both St Austell's Town Clerk and Cornwall**

Council's Localism Team. This devolution package is innovative and the good co-operation between Cornwall Council's Localism team and St Austell's Town Clerk shows what can be achieved from working together."

Jeremy Rowe, Cornwall Council's Cabinet Member for Localism, added: **"The Town Council's devolution programme is bold and exciting as well as being one of the largest in the country. I'm delighted that those involved at both Cornwall Council and St Austell Town Council have worked hard to make this devolution programme possible. Because of the size of the package we've agreed a phased approach to transferring a whole range of assets and services over a 12 month period. The Town Council and their Clerk have been very positive about taking over the ownership of these assets and services, many of which are very important to local people. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with St Austell Town Council over the next year so that the whole programme can be implemented successfully."**

Robin Andrew, Assistant Head of the Localism Team added: **"This is ground breaking work and one of the most ambitious and complicated total place devolution packages anywhere in the England and I know that many other areas are showing a keen interest in it. It has been hard work and staff in the devolution team has worked closely with staff from both service delivery areas, with colleagues in legal, HR and finance and with the Town Council staff to make the transfer as smooth as possible. It is a tribute to their professionalism."**

Cornwall Council's devolution programme offers local councils and communities the opportunity to take on services often enabling a better level of local service provision.

In June this year St Austell Town Council was awarded a grant of £26,601 by the area's Community Network Panel, using money allocated from Cornwall Council's 'Local Devolution Fund' to support the town's major devolution programme. Some of this funding will be used towards the purchase of equipment to help support the Town Council's new horticultural team maintain public open spaces in the town.



